

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A12

THE WASHINGTON POST
25 June 1980

Ex-Agent Criticizes CIA Identity Shield, Antagonizes Senator

Associated Press

Legislation that would make it a crime to publicly identify secret agents is an unnecessary threat to freedom of speech, a CIA official-turned critic told senators yesterday.

Most such agents "work out of embassies and everyone around them knows they are CIA," former agency official John Stockwell told a Senate intelligence Committee hearing.

In fact, Stockwell said, he was told early in his 12-year agency career that "you want people to know you're CIA so they will come to you with information."

He said the agency's aim in seeking criminal penalties "is clearly not to protect the safety of secret agents, but rather to gain an important weapon for the CIA to use in silencing its critics in its domestic fight for existence."

Sen. John Chafee (R-R.I.) told Stockwell his statement "flies in the face" of testimony from current CIA officials.

"You have been deceived," Stockwell said.

Chafee said agents overseas had told him that a non-CIA "cover" was valuable to their work and sometimes even to staying alive, and asked whether their statements were part of "a massive plot."

No, Stockwell replied, "just the party line."

Stockwell is author of the book "In Search of Enemies," which is highly critical of agency operations but names no agents.

Sen. Jake Garn (R-Utah) said he found it hard even to talk to Stockwell because he felt "such disgust for your activities and your book and your loyalty."

Stockwell told Garn he'd been awarded medals for serving his country and added, "I can't let anyone challenge my loyalty to this country."

"I just did," retorted Garn. "I have my freedom of speech, too."

Chafee said Stockwell's opinion of the CIA made his observations on agent identification worthless. Garn agreed.

Deputy CIA Director Frank Carlucci said earlier that other agency critics have publicly identified "substantial numbers" of secret agents. Besides occasionally endangering their lives, such public identification means an end to these agents' effectiveness, he said.

"As a result, the pool of experienced CIA officers is being reduced," he said.

Carlucci repeated the agency's plea for legislation that would make it a crime to name agents in public. A number of bills are pending on the subject. All are aimed at current or former agency personnel; some also are directed at journalists and others.